

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 121030Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7403
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GY
SUBJECT: CURRENT POLITICAL MOOD IN GUYANA

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 2308 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL CLIMATE SINCE THE JULY 10 REFER-
ENDUM CAN PERHAPS BEST BE DESCRIBED AS CONTINUED APATHY AND GLOOM
AMONG THE GENERAL POPULACE AND BUSINESS-LIKE ACTIVITY BY THE
GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE CAUSES FOR DISSATISFACTION AMONG MOST
GUYANESE DUE TO THE CONTINUING ECONOMIC CRISIS, POSTPONEMENT OF
LOCAL AND GENERAL ELECTIONS, AND CONTINUING POWER FAILURES.
DESPITE THE MANY PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER,
PRIME MINISTER FORBES BURNHAM AND HIS PEOPLES NATIONAL CONGRESS
(PNC) REMAIN IN FULL CONTROL DURING THIS TRANSITION FROM REFER-
ENDUM TO NEW CONSTITUTION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FIRST SESSION OF THE "LONG PARLIAMENT", AS THE OPPOSI-
TION PEOPLES' PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP) TERMS THE CURRENT SESSION
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WAS ATTENDED ON AUGUST 4 BY
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REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH THE PPP AND THE UNITED FRONT (UF).
UF LEADER FEILDEN SINGH HAS DECIDED THAT
UF PARLIAMENTARIANS WILL ATTEND FUTURE SESSIONS OF BOTH
PARLIAMENT AND THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. PPP LEADERS ARE
NOW CANVASSING THEIR SUPPORTERS TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR
NOT TO BOYCOTT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND FUTURE SESSIONS
OF PARLIAMENT. (THE NEXT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT IS

SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 14. THE DATE OF THE INITIAL SESSION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED. A MEETING OF THE PNC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 10-12, MAY SHED SOME LIGHT ON WHEN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WILL BE CONVENED.)

2. CHEDDI JAGAN AND THE PPP CONTINUE THEIR STRATEGY OF GARNERING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PNC GOVERNMENT. WHILE IN BARBADOS ON AUGUST 10, JAGAN ACCUSED THE GOG OF BEING A "SEMI-DICTATORSHIP", AND WARNED THAT THE PEOPLE WILL MEET VIOLENCE BY THE GOVERNMENT WITH VIOLENCE. ACCORDING TO THE PPP "MIRROR", AND BARGADIAN RADIO REPORTS, JAGAN WILL CONFER WITH THE ST. VINCENT YULIMO LIBERATION MOVEMENT, VISIT THE CAVE HILL CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, AND TRAVEL TO TRINIDAD AND SURINAM BEFORE RETURNING HOME.

3. WITH ONE EXCEPTION, HOWEVER, THE GOG HAS RECENTLY AVOIDED ANY OVERT MOVES WHICH MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS REPRESSION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS. THE EXCEPTION OCCURRED ON AUGUST 5 WHEN MOSES BHAGWAN WAS ARRESTED BY THE POLICE. THE ARREST REPORTEDLY RESULTED FROM BHAGWAN'S REFUSAL TO PAY A FINE IMPOSED UPON HIM IN APRIL, 1978. BHAGWAN WAS INITIALLY CONVICTED ON 16 COUNTS STEMMING FROM TWO CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST HIM BY THE GOG IN 1976 FOR PUBLISHING THE "DAYCLEAN" NEWS-SHEET, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY HAD 8 OF THE COUNTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OVERTURNED AND THE FINE REDUCED BY THE HIGH COURT LAST APRIL. THE WORKING PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE CLAIMS THAT BHAGWAN IS A "POLITICAL PRISONER" OF THE BURNHAM REGIME.

4. THE GENERAL APATHY AND GLOOM OF THE POPULACE HAS NOT BRIGHTENED SINCE THE REFERENDUM, AS EVIDENCED IN PARTY BY THE LONG LINES FROM APPLICANTS WHICH STILL FORM IN FRONT OF THE AMERICAN CONSULATE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GLOOM WILL LIFT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. O.A. BAPTIST, RECENTLY APPOINTED VICE PRESIDENT OF GUYSTAC, STATED BLUNTLY IN A RADIO BROADCAST ON AUGUST 11 THAT THE GUYANESE HAVE TO FACE "ECONOMIC REALITIES" AND ACCEPT A LOWERING OF THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING. BAPTIST'S DEFENSE OF ECONOMIC AUSTERITY CAME JUST SIX DAYS AFTER PRIMIN BURNHAM'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF A HALVING IN GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES FOR SUGAR PURCHASED BY THE PUBLIC. WITHIN THE LAST MONTH, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF UNSCHEDULED BLACKOUTS IN THE GEORGETOWN AREA HAVE ADDED TO THE GENERAL PESSIMISM. LASTLY, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE SUGAR WORKERS AND BAUXITE MINERS HAVE LESSENERED IN THEIR ANTI-PATHY TO THE GOVERNMENT. ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS CONTINUE TO TRY TO CAPITALIZE ON THESE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE REGIME,

THOUGH THEIR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MARKEDLY LESS ENTHUSIASTIC
AND PERSISTENT SINCE THE JULY 10 REFERENDUM. IN GENERAL,
OPPOSITION EFFORTS IN THIS DIRECTION HAVE BEEN THWARTED
BY BURNHAM'S POLITICAL SKILLS, AND THE DISUNITY AND
INEPTITUDE OF OPPOSITION LEADERS. BARRING A BREAKDOWN
IN SOCIAL SERVICES, OR OTHER MAJOR CATASTROPHE, THE
BURNHAM GOVERNMENT APPEARS CAPABLE OF RIDING OUT ANY
STORM IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

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